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THE CRISIS IN IRELAND.

A WORD TO THE IRISH-AMERICAN.

BY T. W. ROLLESTON.

THE national movement in Ireland has unquestionably received a severe setback since the present Government took office. I venture to think, however, that the untoward situation created by Mr. Birrell's abortive Bill may ultimately have a very beneficial effect if it awakens something of the critical spirit among Irishmen, and sets them, and sympathizers with Ireland, considering whether the means that have been adopted to gain the end of national self-government are really the best that can be devised, or are good for that object at all. It would be well if some of this spirit of wholesome self-criticism could be instilled into friends of the cause on both sides of the Atlantic; for, in the opinion of some very prominent Irish politicians, it seems more important what America thinks than what Ireland thinks. Without in the least adopting this position I may express my conviction that the key to the existing situation, or, rather, to the way out of it, does really lie very largely in the attitude which the Irish in America, and other American sympathizers with the cause, intend to adopt henceforward. I hope to justify this view later on. Meantime, let me ask any one who doubts whether the crisis that has arisen calls for any special searchings of heart to consider these simple facts. The main course of development followed by the British Empire has been towards the recognition of local liberties and local sentiment—in other words, towards the principle of Home Rule. We have at present in office the strongest Liberal Government that has ever existed; and most of its members, including the Premier and the Irish Secretary, are avowedly in favor of extending

Parliamentary Home Rule to Ireland. Yet that Government is absolutely unable to do so; and its position in this matter is recognized as so fundamentally justified and inevitable that the Irish Parliamentary Party go on voting its supplies, and associating themselves with it in the government of Ireland. The agitation which has led to this extraordinary situation has been carried on for a full generation and more, at an expenditure of some \$100,000 a year, far the greater part of which is contributed from the United States. Can any one doubt that this situation calls imperatively for a reconsideration of the whole position? If the present movement, conducted by the present methods, has not put Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman and Mr. Birrell in a position to bring in a Home-Rule Bill with some prospect of success, what reasonable grounds are there for supposing that it will ever put any British Ministers in such a position? No one, I think, can deny that the experiment has been amply and fully tried. No one can deny the unqualified futility of the results. We are certainly under no illusions about this in Ireland. The "no far distant date" at which we have been so often told that our aspirations are to be crowned with success, has now become with us a kind of cynical jest. The political machine still runs along by its own impetus on the old lines, but it no longer attracts the young, the men of ideals, the men of intellectual enthusiasm. Nothing but the contributions from America keep it from following the natural fate of things that have had their day, and falling into dissolution in order to make room for something better.

Is there a something better before us, ready to take the place of this decaying movement? The adherents of the new Sinn Fein or "self-help" policy have a strong affirmative answer to give to this question, and their alternative programme to Parliamentarianism is now being debated wherever Irishmen are taking counsel over their country's needs. An article on Sinn-Feinism by one of its best-known adherents has lately appeared in this REVIEW. It is, no doubt, authoritative as an exposition of the principles of the movement, but I fear it is likely, not unnaturally, perhaps, to give a decidedly exaggerated impression of the actual achievements of the party to which its author belongs. The co-operative movement under Sir Horace Plunkett and the Gaelic movement under Dr. Douglas Hyde had been putting

Sinn-Feinism into practice for years before what is now known as the Sinn Fein party was heard of. This party has done a good work in setting, as it were, the seal of advanced Nationalism on the self-help movement in industry and social reform. It has thus helped, or is helping, to break down the vicious tradition of the orthodox Parliamentary Nationalists, who look with bitter hostility on every attempt to demonstrate that Ireland can do anything for her own progress and prosperity without the leave of the Legislature at Westminster. In this very marked feature of their policy, the Parliamentarians have, I think, taken a singularly bad measure of the needs and duties of the hour, and in fighting them on this ground the Sinn-Feiners are proving themselves a wholesome and progressive force in Ireland. But when we come to consider the elements which, as a distinct organization, the Sinn-Feiners have contributed or propose to contribute to the social and industrial advancement of the country, the display is meagre enough. A visionary scheme for establishing Irish Consuls in foreign cities, for creating an Irish mercantile marine (not by any means a work for politicians and journalists), and a comprehensive system of boycotting English goods, which, if it took real effect, would probably, by exciting a counter-movement, deprive Ireland of the best customer she has for her own output—these are all Sinn Fein has to suggest; and the suggestions, except perhaps the last, are not taken very seriously. Practically, it may be said, Sinn Fein must stand or fall by the one really salient and original feature of its programme—and that is a political feature—the withdrawal of the Irish representatives from the Imperial Parliament. Much will undoubtedly be heard of this proposal in the near future, and it is worth while considering it in its various bearings.

The proposal is put forward as having a kind of constitutional basis. It is argued that Ireland acquired a Charter of legislative independence when Grattan's Parliament was constituted in 1782; that this Charter was abrogated by illegitimate means when, eighteen years afterwards, it gave place to the Union; and that Ireland, in recognizing the Union, as she undoubtedly does by sending representatives to the Imperial Parliament, is acknowledging the validity of the Act of Union and renouncing her claims to be a sovereign State. The strong and dignified course is, then, to withdraw from Parliament and have no compromise

with English treachery. And this, it is urged, would also be the wise and practical course; for, instead of fixing Ireland's gaze on Westminster, and bidding her look for measures of redress from a hostile or ignorant body enormously outnumbering the Irish representatives, it would force the country to concentrate its mind on itself, and to bring original thought and enterprise to the solution of its own problems. No one can deny that there is an immense and as yet almost virgin field open to the organization of voluntary effort in Ireland under the British system of government—a system which, whatever its faults, certainly affords more freedom of private and voluntary action for public objects than any other in Europe, if not in the world. Then, when Ireland had practically taken Home Rule for herself, by the simple process of ignoring England, the time might come when, at some crisis such as that which arose in Austria-Hungary in the time of Deak, England might find it advisable to ratify the *fait accompli*, and acknowledge the constitution of 1782, which is represented as the minimum demand of Irish Nationalism.

Such is the programme of action which is running like a prairie fire among the young men who will shortly be shaping the policy of Ireland. Unless the Parliamentary movement can offer on its side a programme equally clear, honest and self-consistent, it seems to me that it must inevitably go down before its antagonist. Young Ireland is now educated as it never was before, and is learning to think. It will not be content with a flabby opportunism which talks separatism in America, Imperialism in Australia, agrarianism in Connaught and a self-reliant Nationalism nowhere. Parliamentarianism will be forced back on its first principles. It cannot afford to be nakedly opportunist and to scoff at principles any longer, as it did in the days when it had indeed enemies in Ireland, but no rivals.

We have set forth the fundamental principles of Sinn-Feinism. What principles, let us now ask, has Parliamentarianism to set over against them? In the first place, let me emphasize the fact that Sinn-Feinism is distinctly a policy of Separatism. Whatever merits or demerits may attach to Separatism must attach to Sinn-Feinism too, as the latter policy is at present understood. It is true that Separation is not formally included as an object of the movement in what may be called its articles of asso-

ciation, but the status of 1782 distinctly is, and the leading representatives of the movement make no secret of the fact that their intentions do not stop there. Indeed, they cannot if they would; for the status of Grattan's Parliament is an inherently absurd and impossible one, as the English statesmen, who in 1782 so readily gave the Irish nation rope enough to hang itself, very clearly perceived. "Ireland a Sovereign State" is a very taking phrase for the kind of mind which is taken by phrases; but the moment one begins to think about it one is compelled to ask the question: What, then, is England to be? It cannot seriously be proposed to make England a subordinate State to Ireland. If not, then England must be another Sovereign State, and the question at once arises: How are we going to provide for the continued existence of two Sovereign States in one realm? In the United States this problem has been dealt with by the adoption of a written constitution, assigning its proper authority and jurisdiction to each local and to the Federal legislature, with, as a necessary corollary, a Supreme Court, independent of any legislature, to interpret and enforce this constitution. This Court is the only really sovereign body in the States. Even so, no one will claim that the system has worked quite satisfactorily; and the more America enters into relations of peace or of hostility with other World Powers, the more evident will be its defects. But in Britain there is no written constitution, there is no Supreme Court except Parliament; and, however the latter may delegate its power to this portion of the Empire or to that, it still retains absolute sovereignty over the whole. It may safely be affirmed that nothing except a cataclysm upsetting all plans and policies will ever cause that position of sovereignty to be relinquished, or set a written document between the will of the English people and their goal. The status known as Grattan's Parliament, then, which means two Sovereign States with no third power, save the sword, to define their respective spheres of action, would speedily be found to involve, as it did in Grattan's time, either separation or reconquest. It is quite clear that those who adopt this goal as Ireland's political ideal ought to have nothing to do with the Parliament at Westminster. They cannot, if they are honest men; and the other class of men are most unlikely to win the confidence of the country and to be the instruments of a nation's liberation.

I call the Sinn Fein policy, then, a policy of Separatism, and I agree that the programme of the Sinn-Feiners is coherent and consistent with that end, though not with any other. Over against this we may set the policy of what is called Home Rule. Home Rule, I submit, does not differ from Separation in the fact that it goes a shorter distance on the same road. It goes on a wholly different road to a wholly different goal. Home Rule for Ireland—and let me add for England and Scotland—lies right on the main track of Imperial development, as it has gone forward since Edmund Burke first outlined the great conception of a confederation of free States owning the supremacy of a central Power, and a central Power regarding itself as the guardian of the liberties of these States, and basing its claim to their allegiance on the protection it guaranteed them in the development of their individual life. Home Rule, therefore, is strictly an Imperialistic policy—conceiving the Empire as statesmen like Burke and John Morley have conceived it. It makes for the consolidation of the Empire, for the fuller fulfilment of its yet unattained ideals; and it should be asked for distinctly on that ground. It is the very antithesis to Separation, and not, as I think it is sometimes taken to be, a sort of half-way house to it. And just as Separatism ought consistently to have no truck with Parliament or Imperial rule in any shape or form, so Home Rule ought to have no truck with Separatism. If, for any secondary object, it departs from this position, it so far becomes weak, inconsistent and, as a Home-Rule movement, ineffective.

It is not inconsistent for a Home-Ruler to go to the Imperial Parliament and to swear allegiance to the King, for if he is a genuine Home-Ruler he has no thought of ever casting off that allegiance. But it is absolutely inconsistent in him to come back to Ireland and to vituperate other people there because they, in their own way, have chosen to testify allegiance to the same King. This conduct has been systematically pursued by the Parliamentary party, and is beginning to excite disgust. One can respect a loyalist and one can respect a rebel. But a man or a party that puts on and off loyalty as a matter of party tactics, or to please an audience from whom contributions are solicited, is contemptible wherever honor and uprightness in public life are valued. Contributions! There is the real trouble, and there is the real hope. I wish earnestly to appeal to Irish

Americans, whose splendid generosity and fidelity have been so conspicuous in the history of the cause, to consider whether their very eagerness to help is not in part responsible for the situation of to-day. They have shifted the centre of gravity of the Irish movement from Ireland itself to another country. It cannot be good for any people to have their political work done for them at the expense of others. People who live in the United States cannot possibly, however great their sympathy, be in touch with the realities of Irish life. Yet they control the Irish situation, as the power of the purse always must. They can have no knowledge of most of the party whom they maintain; they have no personal responsibility, whether we win or lose on the lines they dictate. Why not leave the movement to those who have that knowledge and that responsibility, and whose lives and fortunes are bound up with the future of their native land? We have no need of American money—not a dollar of it. There was none forthcoming for O'Connell, but O'Connell maintained his long struggle, first for Emancipation, afterwards for Repeal, out of the resources of an Ireland much poorer than Ireland is at present. Ireland spends \$70,000,000 a year on alcohol and \$17,000,000 on tobacco. An infinitesimal sacrifice of these luxuries—not to say poisons!—would yield the \$100,000 a year supposed to be necessary to carry on the struggle for our national existence. What justification, then, is there for laying the ends of the earth under periodic contributions for the furtherance of our cause? The only effect is to foster a class of politicians independent of the people whose aspirations they are supposed to represent, and to relieve that people of the wholesome necessity of thinking and acting for themselves. Only let Ireland's friends in America cease these contributions, and they will immediately force these politicians to turn to their own people, and to frame a policy which that people approve and which that people will follow. By so doing Ireland's American friends will brace and tone up the whole movement. They will make the situation as full of health and hope as it now is of discouragement and demoralization. They will put it at once on its proper basis: the centre of gravity will be restored to Ireland.

If there is any one who doubts where the centre of gravity now is, let him listen to a much more authoritative voice than mine. Two years ago, Mr. John Dillon went down to speak at Black-

rock, County Dublin, on the occasion of an impending municipal election. The election was to turn on the question whether an address of welcome should or should not be presented to the King on a visit which he was to make to Ireland that year. The Parliamentary Party, as every one knows, has denounced these addresses, and has adopted a resolution refusing to accept subscriptions from those who vote for them.* Mr. Dillon, in the course of his arguments against the proposed address, said:

"The National cause in Ireland could not live for one six months if it was deprived of the support of the Irish nation across the Atlantic; and if it were to go forth that we, who for the moment were trusted with the representation and the guardianship of the National cause and the honor of that cause, were tolerating the presentation of addresses to the English King coming to this country as King of this country, I say that the American Irish would turn from us in disgust and never again could we appeal to them to support a cause with which we were identified. Therefore, I say such proceedings tend to kill the National cause in America, and if the National cause is killed in America it will soon die in Ireland."†

I doubt if the most convinced and ardent supporter of the Parliamentary Party in all America can read that utterance without being startled. There, painted in bold colors, is the outcome of a generation of American control of the Irish movement. To such a pass has that movement come that the strongest man in it solemnly declares that it could not last six months if an aid on which it has not the slightest right to reckon were withdrawn. He actually elicited cheers by painting the National movement as a sickly imposture, and telling his hearers that it must not venture to have a mind of its own for fear of offending its paymasters. Is it any wonder that young men of intellect and character are, to use Mr. Dillon's phrase, turning in disgust from this kind of thing? They think that Mr. Dillon's views about the King do not come well from men with the oath of allegiance upon their lips, and they think that, if it were true that the National cause would collapse in six months without aid from oversea, it would have no right to exist for a week. What Blackrock thought of the matter is extremely significant.

* It is said, however, that the resolution in question is worked rather to promote subscription in America than to check them at home. The resolution is disregarded in Ireland, except when municipalities are under Sinn Féin influence.

† "Freeman's Journal," January 12th, 1905.

Blackrock seems to have said to itself: If this is Nationalism, give us Unionism! When Mr. Dillon delivered his speech, there were fifteen Nationalists on the Municipal Council and nine Unionists. Four days afterwards, when the election had taken place, there were sixteen Unionists and eight Nationalists. And the Council has remained Unionist ever since.

What shape, it may be asked, is the Irish movement likely to take if, as I venture to urge, it were left to work itself out on Irish lines and on Irish soil?

Frankly, I do not know. There would be a period of wholesome strife, of the clash of opinion, of thought and criticism. All this would mean the stir of life where there is now torpor. In the end, we might get a genuine Separatist movement, or we might get a genuine Home-Rule movement. Either would be better for the country, materially and morally, than the unprincipled opportunism which (with increasing difficulty) holds the field to-day. Of one thing I feel sure, and I know in this I echo the opinion of very experienced and competent observers—that Home Rule, if we want it, is to be had for the asking, and could have been had almost any time during the past ten years. But we have never asked for it. We are not asking for Home Rule when we couple the request with a loud aside to our friends across the Atlantic: "Never mind! It is only to bamboozle John Bull; what we really want is the cause of Tone and Emmet. Only go on subscribing, and you shall see what you shall see!" John Bull is not deaf, and he hears these asides perfectly well; there are plenty of people who take care that he shall. It is really childish to suppose that he will grant his avowed enemies the power to stab him in the back. We had better take a leaf out of the book of that very valiant and very sensible people, the Boers. If we want Home Rule, we must ask for Home Rule and take all the honorable and logical implications of that position. We shall get it when we do that; we ought not to get it before.

Personally, I am a Home-Ruler, and I no more want to see my country cut loose from the British Empire than a citizen of New York wants to cut loose from the United States. Yet there is one feature of the Sinn Fein policy which, I consider, might, in a modified form, be adopted with great advantage by a Home-

Rule party. It seems to me, indeed, one of the implications of the Home-Rule position that, while we ought to go to Parliament to demand Home Rule, we ought to ask for nothing else whatever but that. We ought to oppose, steadfastly and constantly, every Government that will not grant Home Rule. For no consideration whatever ought we to co-operate with it in the governing of Ireland. It is giving away our whole case to do so. Nor should we lose anything by this policy. There is not a great measure of our day—the Disestablishment of the Church, the Land Acts, the Local Government Act, the foundation of an Irish Department of Agriculture—which would not have been passed just as soon, if not sooner, although the Parliamentary Party had never existed. Agitation in Ireland, of one kind or another, produced them all, except the Local Government Act, which nobody demanded, in or out of Parliament. The record of useful measures which can fairly be attributed to a Parliamentary Party operating at Westminster is barren enough; but, if it were as fruitful as it is barren, it is still the wrong policy for the grand end in view—the winning of Home Rule.

I would plead, therefore, for a fair trial of a genuine Home-Rule movement. But, before any genuine Irish movement of any kind can establish itself, the subsidization of Irish parties from extra Irish sources must come to an end. The whole position hinges on that. Let Ireland's American friends send us no more money; it is only used to stifle original thought and to bolster up a policy which, on the confession of its own most prominent supporters, does not command the confidence of the country. Let them help with their generosity to fertilize the industrial field, to build schools, to endow colleges, to support the Gaelic League, to promote any non-controversial, non-political enterprise that pleases them; but let them contribute not another cent for politics, if they would see Ireland take herself seriously in hand, and address herself resolutely and effectively to the realization of her national destiny.

T. W. ROLLESTON.